LANGUAGE FOCUS: Learn phrases about saying you don’t understand and need something explained – and vocabulary about nerves

Narrator
Hello and welcome to English at University - the series that teaches some English phrases to help you through your first year of study abroad. Mary’s a new student who has just arrived at the University of Studies and now after settling in, her studying can finally begin.

Mary, it's time for your first lecture – but you look like a bundle of nerves…

Mary
…well I am a bit nervous, I couldn’t sleep last night.

Narrator
Don’t worry, you’re not alone – everyone's in the same position. Everything will be fine - good luck!

Mary
OK, well it’s time to go in….

Prof. Not
Ah Mary - we meet again. How’s your head today?

Mary
Better thanks – I see you managed to err… clean your shoes.

Prof. Not
Yes, I did – they still smell a bit but I'll survive. Shall we get down to business - Business Studies – now that most of us are here?

Mary
Yes, of course.

Daniel
Oh… err… sorry I'm late. I went to the wrong room.
Prof. Not
Hmmm… the first rule of business is punctuality. As T.C.Haliburton once said "Punctuality is the soul of business." Now, what is business and why do we study it? Business is an economic system… A company transacts business activities…

Mary
Daniel, what's he talking about?

Daniel
Haven't a clue… have you got a spare pen by the way? Look, you're going to have to ask him to explain.

Mary
Me!?

Prof. Not
What was that Mary?

Mary
Oh, nothing. Sorry.

Narrator
I think Daniel's a nervous wreck – he's not going to help you so I will! If something doesn't make sense, put your hand up and say 'excuse me, could you say that again please?' or 'I don't understand, can you explain that again please?' – or maybe 'could you explain that in a different way please?'

Mary
OK.

Prof. Not
Errr, yes Mary, what is it?

Mary
Prof. Not… it's all very interesting but could you say that again please? Sorry, I don't understand what you mean….

Prof. Not
Oh!

Mary
I'd appreciate it if you could explain it in a different way… please?
Daniel
I think what Professor Not means is you have to have a soul to be in business.

Prof. Not
No…Daniel isn't it? What I mean is…

Narrator
Daniel's got a nerve, pretending he knows it all – perhaps it's just nervous energy that makes him such an idiot! Anyway, well done Mary – you spoke up and asked for clarification. It's a good idea to ask if you don't understand something. Don't pretend you know something when you don't – like Daniel did! Here's a reminder of the questions Mary asked…

Could you say that again please?
Sorry, I don't understand what you mean.
Could you explain that in a different way please?

You can practise these phrases, pick up a few more plus learn some top tips for studying in the UK on our website at bbclearningenglish.com. Now, the lecture is over, I wonder if things are a bit clearer for Mary?

Mary
Thanks Professor. Everything's much clearer now.

Prof. Not
Well I recommend you get my book from the library – ‘Mind Your Own Business’ – oh and Mary… I hold a seminar every Monday at the local pub should you wish to join us sometime?

Mary
Yes Professor… thanks, I will.

Prof. Not
You can call me Robert.

Daniel
Ok Robert! It's a date!

Prof. Not
Oh, it's you. Well, don't forget to bring your notes.

Daniel
Oh no, my notes! I left them in the classroom.